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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 10 MOSCOW 005645

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TAGS PREL, PGOV, MARR, MOPS, RS
SUBJECT: CHECHNYA: THE ONCE AND FUTURE WAR
REF: MOSCOW 5461 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns. Reason 1.4 (b, d)

1. (C) Introduction: Chechnya has been less in the glare of constant international attention in recent years. However, the Chechnya conflict is
Summary

2. (C) President Putin has pursued a two-pronged strategy to extricate Russia from the war in Chechnya and establish a viable long-term modus

3. (C) To deal effectively with Chechnya in the long term, Putin needs to increase his control over the Russian Power Ministries and reduce of

The Starting Point: Problems of the "Russianized" Conflict

4. (C) Chechnya was only one of the conflicts that broke out in the former Soviet Union at the time of the country's collapse. Territorial cor

5. (C) Why is this? The charge is often made that Russia's motive for keeping the conflicts frozen is geostrategic, or "neo-imperialism," or f

6. (C) We would propose an additional factor: the determination of Russia's senior officer corps to remain deployed in those countries to enga
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activity has been as mercenaries -- for instance, Russian active-duty soldiers fought on both sides in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from 1991-

7. (C) This "military-entrepreneurial" bloc soon formed an autonomous institution, in some respects outside the government's control. There ar

The Secret History of the Chechen War

8. (C) The lack of central control over the military, as well as officers' cupidity, may have been a prime cause of the first Chechnya War. In

9. (C) Chechnya was a major entrepot for laundering oil for this arbitrage. It appears to have been used both by the military (including Grach

10. (C) Chechnya was the home of Ruslan Khasbulatov and served various purposes for his faction of the Russian elite. He took advantage of th

11. (C) After Khasbulatov and Rutskoy were written out of the Russian equation in October 1993, so was Dudayev. Clandestine Russian support fc

12. (C) Given the gangsterish background of the war, it is no surprise that the military conducted the war itself as a profit-making enterpris
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Groznyy. By May 1995 an anti-Dudayev Chechen could lament, "When we invited the Russian army in we expected an army -- not this band of marauders

13. (C) Before they lost this "cash-cow" to their enemies, Russian officers went to great lengths to keep their friends from interfering with

14. (C) When the second war began in September 1999, Russian forces again started profiteering from a trade in contraband oil. Western eyewitness

No Exit for Putin

15. (C) Sometime between one and two years after Russian forces were unleashed for a second time on Chechnya, Putin appears to have realized t

16. (C) Putin thus found himself without a winning strategy and had to develop one. He has taken a two-pronged approach. One prong was subord

Chechenization, Ahmad-Haji Kadyrov, and the Salafists

17. (C) The second prong of Putin's strategy was to hand the fighting over to Chechens. "Chechenization" differs from Vietnamization or Iraqif
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cooperation with Federal authorities that in practice is constantly re-negotiated.

18. (C) Chechenization is associated with Ahmad-Haji Kadyrov, the insurgent commander and chief Mufti of separatist Chechnya. After he defecte

19. (C) The traditional Islam of Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia is based on Sufism, or Islamic mysticism. Though nominally the Sufi orders

20. (C) When Arab fighters joined the Chechen conflict in 1995, they brought with them a "Salafist" doctrine that attempts to emulate the func

21. (C) Wahhabism-based forms of Islam started appearing in Chechnya by 1991, as Chechens were able to travel and some went to Saudi Arabia fc

22. (C) Al-Khattab's fighters were never a major military factor during the war, but they were the key to Gulf money, which financed power str

23. (C) After the first war, al-Khattab set up a camp in Serzhen-Yurt ("Baza Kavkaz") for military and religious indoctrination. It provided c

Battle Lines in Peacetime
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24. (C) Chechen society is distinguished by its propensity to unite in war and fragment in peace. It is based on opposing dichotomies: the Vay

25. (C) This power struggle took on a religious expression. Since Basayev was associated with al-Khattab and Salafism, Maskhadov positioned hi

26. (C) The religious division dictated certain policies to each side. The Sufi tradition of Maskhadov and Kadyrov had been associated for ove

Chechenization Begins

27. (C) The second Russian invasion did not unite the Chechens, as previous pressure had. Perhaps the influence of al-Khattab and his Salafist

28. (C) Putin appears to have stumbled upon Kadyrov, and their alliance seems to have grown out of chance as much as design. But they were abl

29. (C) If the objective of Chechenization was to win over fighters who would carry on the fight against Basayev and the Arab successors to Kh

The Military Overstays Its Welcome
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30. (C) The development of Kadyrov's fighting force, along with that of the Yamadayev brothers, left the stage clear for a drawdown of Russian

31. (C) Kadyrov could not be fully autonomous until he -- not the Russians -- controlled Chechnya's oil. He therefore demanded the creation of

In the Reign of Ramzan

32. (C) Kadyrov's passing left power in the hands of his son Ramzan, who was officially made Deputy Prime Minister. The President, Alu Alkhan

33. (C) Ramzan Kadyrov has none of the religious or personal prestige that his father had. He is a warlord pure and simple -- one of several,

34. (C) Kadyrov is also fortunate in that the FSB, with whom he has close ties, has by this time emasculated the military as "prong one" of Pu

135. (C) Despite its successes to date, however, Putin's strategy is far from completed. He still needs to keep forces in the region as a constant presence.
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136. (C) Another approach is the Chechenization of the Federal forces themselves. Recently "North" and "South" battalions of ethnically Chechen forces have been created.
What Can We Expect in the Future?

137. (C) The Chechen population is the great loser in this game. It bears an ever heavier burden in shake-downs, opportunity costs from misadventures, etc.

138. (C) The insurgency will remain split between those who want to carry on Maskhadov's non-Salafist struggle for national independence and those who want to join the Islamic world.

139. (C) Prospects would be poor for the nationalists even if Kadyrov and/or Yamadayev were assassinated (and there is much speculation that or not).

140. (C) We expect that Salafism will continue to grow. The insurgents even inside Chechnya are reportedly becoming predominantly Salafist, as evidenced by the recent attacks on the Dagestani mosque in Grozny.

141. (C) Outside Chechnya, the most likely venue for clashes with authorities is Dagestan. Putin's imposition of a "power vertical" there has not helped matters.
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In one province in the south of the republic, an uprising against the chief appointed by Aliyev's predecessor was suppressed by gunfire. Four deaths were reported.

142. (C) Local forces are unreliable in such cases, for clan and blood-feud reasons. Wahhabist jamaats flourished in the strategic ethnically mixed areas.

143. (C) Indeed, destabilization is the most likely prospect we see when we look further down the road to the next decade. Chechenization alone is not the answer.
What Should Putin Be Doing?

144. (C) Right now Putin's policy towards Chechnya is channeled through Kadyrov and Yamadayev. Putin's Plenipotentiary Representative (PolPred) is not helping.

145. (C) Putin should continue to reform the military and the other Power Ministries. Having asserted control through Sergey Ivanov, Putin has not done enough.

146. (C) Lastly, Putin should realize that his current policy course is not preventing the growth of militant, armed Jihadism. Rather, every time he intervenes, he fuels it.
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of militant jihadism. Kozak himself made clear in a recent conversation with the Ambassador that he appreciates clearly the deep social and economic problems.

147. (C) We need also to be aware that Putin's strategy is generating a backlash in Moscow. Ramzan Kadyrov's excesses, his Putin-given immunity, etc.
Is There a Role for the U.S.?

148. (C) Russia does not consider the U.S. a friend in the Caucasus, and our capacity to influence Russia, whether by pressure, persuasion or espionage, is limited.

149. (C) Making headway with Putin or his successor will require close cooperation with our European allies. They, like the Russians, tend to view the Caucasus as a black hole.

150. (C) We and the Europeans need to put our proposals of assistance to the North Caucasus in a different context: one that recognizes the role of the Caucasus in the global energy market.

151. (C) Our interests call for an understanding of the context and a positive emphasis. We cannot expect the Russians to react well if we limit their options.

152. (C) Aside from the political optic, a rush to cut humanitarian assistance before recovery programs are fully up and running would leave a bad taste.

153. (C) Resources aimed at Chechnya often wind up in private pockets. Though international assistance has a better record than Russian assistance and is more closely monitored, we must also be wary of assistance that lends itself to massive corruption and state-sponsored terrorism.
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than Russian assistance and is more closely monitored, we must also be wary of assistance that lends itself to massive corruption and state-sponsored terrorism.

154. (C) We also need to coordinate closely with Kozak (or his successor), both to strengthen his position vis--vis the warlords and to ensure that he is not oversteering.

155. (C) The interagency paper "U.S. Policy in the North Caucasus -- The Way Forward" provides a number of important principles for positive engagement.

156. (C) We can also emphasize programs that help create jobs and job opportunities: microfinance (where feasible), credit cooperatives and small business development.

157. (C) Lastly, we need to look ahead in our relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia to ensure that they become more active and effective players in the region.

Conclusion

158. (C) The situation in the North Caucasus is trending towards destabilization, despite the increase in security inside Chechnya. The steps we can take to prevent further deterioration are limited.